

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker of the House
H-232, the Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

December 8, 2015

Dear Speaker Ryan,

We write to urge you to immediately bring the Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act of 2015, H.R. 1076, to the House Floor for consideration and a vote.

In light of the horrific terrorist attacks in recent weeks, and in recognition of the ongoing threat that violent extremism poses to the safety and security of American communities, the cost of inaction on this legislation would be unacceptably high. Elected officials and candidates for office on both sides of the aisle have reiterated a view that our constituents across the country share: persons on the FBI's terrorist watchlist should not pass the background checks that allow them to buy guns.

Under current law, persons suspected of planning or carrying out terrorist activity can legally purchase guns in the United States, and they are doing so, even while law enforcement may be investigating them or pursuing their arrest or indictment. According to the Government Accountability Office, individuals on the federal terrorist watchlist have tried to buy or obtain a firearm or explosive license or permit at least 2,233 times. In 2,043 of those cases (91 percent of the time), the individuals successfully passed the background checks and were able to purchase the weapons or explosives. In 2013 and 2014, FBI data showed that individuals on the terrorist watchlist were involved in firearm-related background checks 485 times, and 455 of those (about 94 percent) were allowed to proceed. When over 90 percent of those on the terrorist watchlist who try to pass a background check succeed, there is no question that we need to make the background check system stronger.

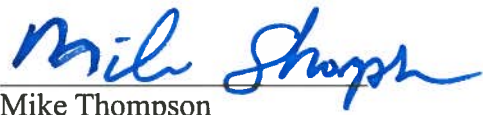
The Denying Firearms and Explosives to Dangerous Terrorists Act of 2015 will close this gaping loophole in current law and make our communities safer. If enacted, this bill would prohibit the sale or distribution of firearms to any individual whom the Attorney General has determined to be engaged in terrorist activities. It also would grant the Attorney General the authority to deny a firearms license to individuals for whom there is a reasonable belief that the individual may use a firearm or explosive in connection with terrorist activity. With respect to important due process concerns, the legislation would allow any individual whose firearm or explosive license application is denied to bring legal action challenging the denial.

The need to close this "terror gap" loophole should not be a partisan issue, and the legislation has Republican, Democratic, and Independent co-sponsors in both the House and the Senate. We urge you to quickly bring it to the floor for a vote in the House. While we were disheartened to watch this legislation fail in the Senate, that failure creates an opportunity for the House to show principled leadership and move forward. Congress has a duty to all Americans to write responsible laws that protect both the rights of our citizens and the safety of our communities; we believe that this common-sense legislation is long overdue.



Joseph P. Kennedy
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress